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ABSTRACT

Effective teachers not only remain abreast of new developments in their fields, but strive toward increased mastery of teaching skills by continually extending and refining the specialized knowledge acquired prior to entering the profession. Teachers are expected to lead active intellectual lives and to evince a breadth of erudition that will furnish students with a model of cultivated intellect. The effective teacher participates in periodic review of educational goals with sensitivity to changing societal circumstances and requirements. Effective teachers plan carefully both what is to happen in their classrooms and what is to result from it, so that precious class time will not be wasted for lack of preparation. They exhibit flexibility in taking advantage of unexpected opportunities for enrichment and in dealing with students' difficulties when they become evident. Effective teachers make their influence felt both in the formal deliberations of the faculty and its committees and in informal discussions and conversations among colleagues. To remain at the forefront of their craft, effective teachers take full advantage of the resources offered by professional associations and unions. They are ambassadors of education in the communities in which they teach or reside, helping their fellow citizens to understand what the schools are trying to do and accomplish, learning what is expected of the schools, and working with the community to improve the schools. (JD)

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The Effective Teacher

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October 1981

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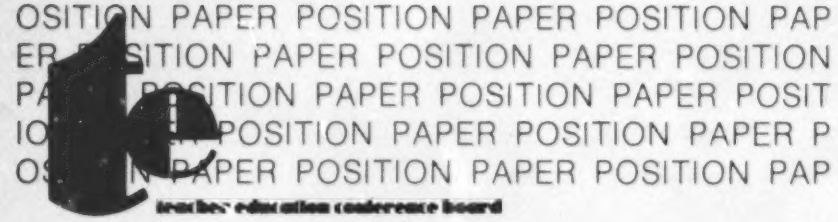
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There is a line in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* that reads, "The nature of bad news infects the teller," and it has remained pertinent in many contexts. In the case of today's public schools, teachers have let out the word that their students generally do not achieve at the level of students in past times, that they are less well behaved, that many lack the motivation to learn, and that a significant number do not even bother to come to class. In searching for the cause of this distressing situation, the public has, in large part, placed a blanket of blame on schoolteachers.

Any group that calls itself a profession can expect to be held accountable. Professional training and professional licensure should be emblematic of the practitioner's initial competence. As teaching becomes a recognized profession in New York State, it is imperative that teachers themselves determine not only what are the basic requirements for entry into the profession, but also what are the marks of the effective teacher and how effectiveness can be increased. If professionals do not do this job, they must expect to be judged by a public that is impatient for results and that has romantic notions of what good teachers do and who they are. If the teaching profession does attempt to interpret teaching effectiveness both for itself and for those whom it serves, it can expect to gain a clearer notion of its own roles and improved professional performance. This TECB Position Paper begins the profession's job of defining teacher effectiveness.

Daniel E. Griffiths,
President
October, 1981

The Effective Teacher

It is the obligation of any profession to assure its clients and society of ethical conduct and effective performance by each of its members. As difficult and delicate as the ethical aspect of professional regulation is, it is probably less troublesome, at least with respect to teaching, than is the explication and monitoring of effectiveness. Yet, how effectively teachers perform the functions expected of them has tremendous significance for both the future of society and the life of every individual in it. This paper examines diverse views of effectiveness, indicates the complexity of the concept, identifies some marks of an effective teacher from the profession's standpoint, and suggests how we can best assure that every teacher is an effective one.

PERSPECTIVES OF EFFECTIVENESS

It is not uncommon for an American adult to have had a dozen teachers in elementary school and perhaps twice as many at the secondary-school level. A college graduate may have encountered thirty or forty more. After spending so many hours of childhood and youth interacting with so many teachers, the average person feels quite competent to recall some as more effective than others. By contrast, during the same period the individual may have had direct experience (and fleeting at that) with only one or two dentists, with perhaps no greater number of physicians, and quite possibly with no lawyer at all. With such limited contact with so few representatives, most people have far less basis for judging the effectiveness of these professional practitioners than that of teachers.

But, given the superior opportunity for observation and comparison, on what bases do we pass judgment on the effectiveness of the teachers we have known? After the passage of a considerable amount of time, we sometimes say that a teacher was very effective because in retrospect we believe that he or she had a significant influence on our overall development. In other instances, much closer to our encounter, we may deem a teacher effective because we feel that we learned a great deal from him or her. Or, we may merely have enjoyed the things we did in a teacher's classes, whether or not we felt we learned much. In some cases, we may label as effective the teacher who made us all "behave," or was interested in our personal

problems, or was always available for help, or encouraged us to do our best, or took an active part in our community.

And sometimes the teachers we considered so effective our classmates thought to be "terrible." The same is true of our children's teachers. Though we do not know them nearly as well as we did our own, we often consider one effective for one reason and another effective for quite a different reason. Moreover, our neighbors may disagree with us on both, because they apply different criteria or weight them differently or employ different standards or get different reports from their children. Every evaluative judgment rests on these four factors: which attributes are considered relevant to the worth of whatever is being evaluated (criteria), how important each one is (weighting), what observations will serve as evidence of each criterion (indicators), and with what they will be compared (standards).

Strictly speaking, the effectiveness of anything pertains to its effects, the results that can be attributed to it. Sometimes these consequences are immediately apparent, but in other instances they may not manifest themselves for years. Henry Adams went so far as to claim that "a teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." Obviously, the more remote an effect is, the more difficult it is to identify with certainty what or who was responsible for it. Moreover, even when the causal agent can be identified with some certainty, we are reluctant to impute effectiveness if the result was not intended, though we are not as hesitant to assign blame for unintended effects that are undesirable.

Despite the uncertainties and inconsistencies, however, there is general agreement, among public and profession alike, that the ultimate indicators of teachers' effectiveness are certain qualities of the adults formed under their influence. These qualities include various kinds of knowledge, proficiency, and sentiment, though which ones take precedence and which are properly the responsibility of teachers are matters on which there is less consensus. Moreover, even if there were concurrence on the qualities that were most desirable, and on the extent to which they were attributable to the efforts of teachers, the contributions of a particular teacher would remain uncertain.

Perhaps because of the difficulties surrounding both the determination and attribution of effects, we frequently base our judgments of effectiveness on the behavior and characteristics of the agents in question. In doing so, we assume that we are

reasonably certain concerning which actions bring about particular results or which personal qualities are associated with effective performance. But, with respect to teaching, we may be even less sure of the relationship of various behaviors and characteristics to effectiveness than we are about the identification and attribution of results. Much research has been conducted over many years in an effort to identify critical actions and traits, and we do know some of the factors that are related to certain kinds of effectiveness. Until we have a firmer knowledge base, however, we must rely primarily on professional judgment in identifying effective performance.

There is a further problem that concerns the scope of our claim of effectiveness. No one claims to be equally effective in every aspect of his or her work. Each individual has his forte and, in the case of teachers, we may be as inclined to consider effective those who excel in one sector of their calling as those versatile ones who are adequate in all of them. Indeed, teachers' collective effectiveness as a faculty may be greater where among them they possess a variety of strong features than where all are moderately competent in everything.

EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING

In the discussion to this point it has been noted that:

1. Most people have a greater opportunity to observe the performance of teachers than that of any other professional group.
2. Because they have encountered many more teachers, people have a better basis for comparison and a greater tendency to judge their effectiveness than they do with respect to other professionals.
3. A person may consider one teacher effective for one reason and another effective for a different reason.
4. Different people often disagree on a teacher's effectiveness, because they have had different experiences with the teacher, interpret effectiveness differently, or hold different standards.
5. While effectiveness literally pertains to results produced, it is frequently applied to the teacher's behavior and personal qualities.
6. The long-range effects of teachers may be their most significant ones, but the more remote the results are, the more for-

midable is the task of attributing them to a particular individual.

7. Equally uncertain is the association between results and various teaching behaviors and teacher characteristics.

8. Teachers are sometimes considered effective on the basis of overall performance and in other instances for some singular excellence.

These points only begin to delineate the complexity of defining the effective teacher. They have focused on the client's or layman's viewpoint. What do teachers' professional peers or administrative superiors take effectiveness to be? Does the same definition of effectiveness apply to teachers at the elementary, middle-school, high-school, and college levels? Is a common definition appropriate for teachers of English and of industrial arts, for teachers in rural and in inner-city schools, for teachers of normal and exceptional students? Are beginning and experienced teachers subject to the same interpretation of effectiveness?

The circumstances of teaching vary enormously. Besides its great diversity with respect to experience, setting, field, level, and student characteristics, teaching addresses a multiplicity of goals and entails a variety of roles. To limit effectiveness to the transmission of knowledge and the development of intellectual abilities is to overlook contributions to other educational goals, such as socialization, character development, zeal for continued learning, full realization of unique potential, emotional stability, vocational aspiration, and practical competence. No teacher can be all things to all students or equally effective in contributing to all goals of education.

Moreover, a teacher's effectiveness goes well beyond his or her contribution to certain (or even all) educational goals in the classroom teaching-learning encounter. A teacher also plays a role as model and mentor for students beyond the classroom, as a faculty colleague, and as a member of the profession and its various associations and unions. In each of these roles, somewhat different qualities are important, different behaviors are called for, and different effects are sought. In each, therefore, the meaning and criteria of effectiveness differ.

Clearly, our conception of "the effective teacher" cannot be some narrow, conventional stereotype. We need not, however, reject the notion of ineffectuality among teachers. Responsible administrators are obliged to render judgments regarding teacher

effectiveness, and students, alumni, parents, and the general public make such classifications as a matter of course. The teaching profession has its own interpretation of what constitutes an effective teacher, however, and has a responsibility to persuade others to reexamine their conceptions in its light.

THE EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL TEACHER

Some marks of the effective teacher, in the profession's view, include the following:

1. Diligence in keeping oneself current and increasing one's mastery with respect to the body of knowledge and skill taught;
2. Commitment to continual personal growth through intellectual activity;
3. Awareness of societal expectations, institutional goals, and professional responsibilities;
4. Receptivity to advances in pedagogical practices;
5. Conscientiousness and proficiency in planning and preparation for teaching encounters, based on knowledge of the outcomes to be sought and the most efficient means of achieving them;
6. Artistry in managing and performing instructional functions effectively;
7. Concern for students as individuals, based on mutual respect;
8. Dependability as participant in faculty planning and decision-making;
9. Dedication to furthering the effectiveness of the teaching profession;
10. Generosity in contributing talents to community welfare and improvement.

As suggested earlier, a teacher who manifests conspicuous excellence on only a limited number of these points may merit a reputation for effectiveness. While there is no guarantee that adequacy on every one of them will bring about every desired result or even any particular effect, it is unlikely that a teacher considered to

be ineffective will display them all. A brief discussion of each will explain why they are deemed characteristic of effective teachers.

1. *Maintaining Mastery.* No teacher can be effective without something to teach, and no field of instruction remains static. Effective teachers not only remain abreast of new developments in their fields, but strive toward increased mastery of them by continually extending and refining the specialized knowledge acquired prior to entering the profession. Earning a graduate degree contributes to such mastery, but continued effectiveness demands continual attention to one's command of one's instructional subject matter.

2. *Intellectual Growth.* As members of a learned profession, teachers are properly expected to lead active intellectual lives and to evince a breadth of erudition and cultural awareness that transcends the particular subjects taught. Such breadth of learning can contribute directly to a teacher's effectiveness by enriching instruction. But beyond this, it furnishes students with a model of cultivated intellect which they can respect and emulate. There is no better way to encourage life-long learning than to demonstrate it.

3. *Discernment.* To be effective one must be clear about what one is expected to accomplish. The effective teacher is fully cognizant of the educational goals to be achieved and participates in their periodic review with sensitivity to changing societal circumstances and requirements. Such teachers also know and accept their obligations to both their profession and the community they serve. Like all good workmen, they know their jobs.

4. *Professional Alertness.* Awareness of expectations is fruitless without the ability to meet them. Effective teachers keep abreast of developments in educational practice as well as in their substantive fields. They neither persist in out-moded, ineffectual procedures nor uncritically adopt every faddish practice that comes along. Effectiveness is promoted by inventiveness, but needless reinvention can be avoided by alertness and receptivity to good ideas from professional colleagues, near and far.

5. *Foresightedness.* Effective teaching is no accident, and effective teachers do not leave instruction to chance. They plan carefully both what is to happen in their classrooms and what is to result from it, so that precious class time will not be wasted for lack of preparation. They modify their plans and depart from them when necessary, but they do not rely on improvisation, nor do they permit

matters to drift aimlessly. Students lose confidence in teachers who do not seem to know what they are trying to do.

6. *Skillfulness and Style.* The best laid plans are of no value unless they are implemented and may have little effect if clumsily executed. One of the most common ways of judging teachers' effectiveness is to observe them carrying out instructional plans in the classroom. Often a stereotyped preconception of teacher behavior is imposed, favoring a somewhat unimaginative, mechanical craftsmanship and a slavish adherence to plans. The effective teacher exhibits flexibility in taking advantage of unexpected opportunities for enrichment and in dealing with students' difficulties when they become evident. Beyond this, a master teacher, like any true artist, manifests a unique personal style that departs from the stereotype. Style is revealed in subtle ways — in variations and transitions, in a sense of timing, in an absence of tension and an immunity from surprise, in a contagious enthusiasm that spawns an optimal level of non-frenetic excitement, and, except in the most impossible situations, in an unobtrusive mode of classroom management.

7. *Regard for Students.* Effective teachers treat students like people, not as objects or numbers. They regard each one as an individual and show sincere concern for the well-being of each and genuine interest in helping each succeed. They do not so much demand respect from students as earn it, by according them the respect to which they are entitled, without regard for race, gender, or ethnic origin. Many teachers are remembered as effective not for what they taught but for what they were.

8. *Collegiality.* Teaching is a lonely endeavor, largely carried out by the individual in isolation from his or her colleagues. Nowhere was this more true than in the one-room school, but even in the largest contemporary school, the teacher in the classroom is still a solitary practitioner. Nevertheless, most teachers today are also members of a faculty. As a responsible collectivity, a faculty is dependent for its overall effectiveness on the participation of all its members in the making of decisions and on each member, individually, in carrying them out. Effective teachers make their influence felt both in the formal deliberations of the faculty and its committees and in informal discussions and conversations among colleagues, particularly those teaching the same grade or subject. A willingness to assume leadership, when appropriate, and a record of carrying out assignments in behalf of the group, mark a teacher as effective in the eyes of peers. The selfless contributions of such

dependable teachers to sound program planning and evaluation seldom come to the attention of the general public.

9. *Sense of Profession.* One of the primary reasons for the existence of professional associations and unions is to encourage and assist practitioners to increase their effectiveness in rendering the services in which they are specialists. To remain at the forefront of their craft, effective teachers take full advantage of this source of support and, in turn, contribute their share to teachers' collective efforts to promote educational improvement and achieve full professional recognition. The sense of profession which marks effective teachers today can be expected to be further strengthened by the establishment of a legally recognized profession with its own professional practices board.

10. *Community Involvement.* Effective teachers are ambassadors of education in the communities in which they teach or reside, helping their fellow citizens understand what the schools are trying to do and accomplish, learning what their neighbors need and expect from the schools, and joining them in creating the kind of social environment that reinforces, rather than frustrates, the schools' efforts. Through example and exhortation the effective teacher serves as an educator of the public in the broadest sense.

SECURING MORE EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

The three avenues to increased teacher effectiveness are 1) selection, 2) initial preparation, and 3) continuing growth. When teaching becomes a recognized profession, there will be six critical selection points: 1) admission to a preparation program, 2) qualifying examination for licensure, 3) evaluation of internship, 4) acceptance for, and completion of, graduate study, 5) initial appointment, and 6) granting of tenure. At each successive point, a sounder basis exists for judging a person's potential for becoming an effective teacher.

During the period of initial academic and professional preparation, there can be substantial progress toward many of the ten marks of an effective teacher identified earlier. Other aspects are more appropriately developed during the guided internship. Further refinement of many of the elements can be expected to take place in the course of graduate study. But the attainment and maintenance of full effectiveness as a teacher probably rest most heavily on a continuing program of personal growth and formal professional study

in-service. In time, all teachers should exhibit all of the marks of effectiveness to an acceptable level and some of them to an exceptionally high degree.

Ultimately, of course, the primary responsibility for achieving and maintaining effectiveness rests with the individual teacher. Others can be supportive, however, and measures taken to encourage and assist active teachers to grow professionally are well worth the effort. Two chief sources of support are supervisors and fellow teachers. As members of the same profession, those who have administrative or supervisory responsibilities should be sensitive to the needs of individual teachers and faculty groups. They should either be themselves competent to help teachers overcome difficulties and improve performance or be in a position to arrange opportunities for such assistance. Society has an obligation to assure that teachers are provided with the supportive counsel and in-service growth opportunities they need. As teachers achieve professional status, faculties should increasingly assume responsibility for making decisions regarding curricular and instructional matters and for helping one another to become more effective.

With a fully recognized profession that is solicitous about promoting its members' effectiveness, with concerned and supportive leadership in schools, and with close cooperation among schools, teacher centers, teacher education institutions, and state officials, every active teacher should be an effective one: liberally educated; current in both his or her subject of instruction and its pedagogy; aware of what is expected of teachers and schools; skillful and conscientious in planning, preparing for, and carrying out instruction; respectful toward students and concerned about their welfare; and actively involved in faculty, professional, and community affairs.

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